

Mr. LOTT. I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Nevada. I also note with regard to the last paragraph, we do not anticipate there will be a need to vitiate the agreement with regard to the Chao agreement. It is just that we have not received all of the papers yet. We do not expect there to be any problem, but because we do not have it all, it was necessary to put this in.

Also—and I appreciate Senator REID's comments—it is our anticipation to proceed, after these three stacked votes Tuesday afternoon, on the debate with regard to the Attorney General nomination, and it is at least my hope, and I believe everybody's hope, that we will be able to complete action on that nomination next week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. In light of this agreement then, the next votes will occur back to back at 2:45 p.m. on Tuesday next.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today to comment on several of the nominations on which we have voted in the last few days.

I am pleased the Senate is acting responsibly and quickly to put the President's cabinet in place. While I am sure I will not always agree with everything proposed by the nominees we have confirmed, I stand ready to work with them toward our common goal of the United States's best interest.

I especially want to welcome Governor Tommy Thompson, of my State of Wisconsin, to his new position as Secretary of Health and Human Services. I had the honor of presenting the Governor at his hearings before the Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees. As I said there, the Administration is truly fortunate to have a man of his energy, creativity, and intelligence in this extremely important position.

I also want to comment on some of the other nominations on which the Senate has already acted.

I am pleased to lend my support to the nomination of General Colin L. Powell to be Secretary of State. There are many foreign policy challenges facing the next Administration including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our peacekeeping commitments abroad, instability in the Middle East and in other hot spots, and the continued evolution of our relationships with Russia and China. I am confident that General Powell brings a wealth of experience, a formidable in-

tellect, and a level head to the challenges ahead. I look forward to working with Secretary Powell in forging a truly bipartisan foreign policy.

I am also pleased with President Bush's decision to appoint Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense. He is an experienced voice on defense issues, and one that the Congress has come to rely on for outside analysis. He recently addressed the threat of ballistic missiles in a special report to Congress that now shapes much of the debate on ballistic missile defense. His years of public service and expertise will give him the credibility inside the Pentagon to make the tough choices that face the new administration, and they will face many. I feel confident that Secretary Rumsfeld is qualified to help the President shape our armed forces to meet the evolving threats of the new century.

And finally, I support the nomination of Rodney Paige to be the Secretary of Education. Dr. Paige has received overwhelming praise since his nomination was announced, and in my opinion, there is good reason for that. He understands the need to change the system when the old programs aren't working like they should. He is willing to work with all sides—from teachers to parents to principals to school board members. And he brings with him to Washington an important lesson from his time in Houston: If you set high standards for students and teachers, and require them to meet them, they will strive to succeed.

Mr. President, there are many worthy nominees who deserve comment and support, but I will reserve further remarks until we engage later in the year in what I hope will be bipartisan legislating.

NOMINATION OF ANTHONY PRINCIPI

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate unanimously approved the nomination of Anthony Principi to be President Bush's Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In my judgment, Secretary Principi is supremely qualified to take on the challenges that will face the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and I fully supported his confirmation.

Secretary Principi will bring a wealth of experience in a broad-range of capacities pertaining to veterans and veterans health to his work at the VA. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy and decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, Secretary Principi is personally aware of our veterans needs and concerns. He was appointed deputy secretary of Veterans Affairs by President George Bush in 1989 and served as Acting Secretary during 1992—providing him with a working knowledge of the VA's structure and an understanding of how to make the system work for our veterans. Most recently, Secretary Principi served as president of a California-based health care contractor. Through a blend of public and private service, Secretary Principi has assembled an impressive track record and compiled the type of

practical experience that will serve him well at the VA.

I was pleased to hear during Secretary Principi's nomination hearing that he plans to focus on veterans benefits, among other concerns. I agree strongly with this priority. Through dedicated service and sacrifice, generations of veterans and their families have answered the call to serve this nation in her darkest hours and most shining moments alike. They have kept the solemn covenant established by honored patriots past and have earned the gratitude of a grateful nation.

With 139 facilities serving 3.5 million veterans and survivors, however, the task at hand is a daunting one. While broadly speaking, the VA provides high-quality health-care and services to our veteran community, ensuring that such a standard is maintained requires constant attention and a firm guiding hand. I am confident that Secretary Principi has the leadership and managerial skill, and perhaps more importantly, the compassion, to serve well our veterans and their families, as they have served our country.

I commend President Bush for putting forth such a quality and qualified nominee. Secretary Principi will be a credit to this Administration. I am pleased that the Senate has moved emphatically to confirm him as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I look forward to working closely with him on issues of mutual concern, and I wish him well.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am very pleased to support the nomination of Anthony Principi to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Principi is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and a combat-decorated veteran who commanded a River Patrol Unit in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War.

Since completing his service in the U.S. Navy, Mr. Principi has had a distinguished career in public service serving as staff director of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs for several years until he was appointed Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs by President Bush in 1992. Now, as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi will have responsibility for a \$48 billion budget in the Federal Government's second largest department, coordinating a nationwide system of health care services and benefits to serve America's more than 25 million veterans.

As we begin the 107th Congress, there are few challenges we face more important than ensuring that America's veterans receive the health care and benefits that they so justly deserve. The challenges include providing adequate funding for veterans health care services, ensuring access to VA health care for homeless veterans and veterans living in rural areas, providing timely access to specialized medical care, and responding to the many concerns of Persian Gulf Veterans as well as veterans with service in the Balkans. Secretary Principi, as a combat veteran in